

Good afternoon. My name is Christina Gingle. I am here representing the Green Bay Area Public School District. I serve in the role as the social work coordinator. The purpose of my input today is provide a local perspective on the scope of the needs of students and how our ability as a school district to comprehensively meet those needs, impacts the future for all of us. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction just sent out a news release providing a snapshot of results from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey which is designed to monitor health risk behaviors of students. While there were some encouraging trends noted including a decline in alcohol and marijuana usage, students are reporting higher rates of feeling sad or hopeless and considering suicide. The news release also noted "nearly 50 percent of girls and 30 percent of boys report anxiety".

Almost 50 percent of girls is an absolutely staggering number, but not overly surprising given the immense pressure students encounter during their school career. As a school social worker, I often get well-intended comments about the work I do to support "those" students, but I want to caution everyone to consider, it is not just a certain subgroup of students who need support. Consider students who are taking many advanced placement classes, strive to get into as many extra-curricular activities as time permits, and perform well on the ACT as all of these factors could potentially determine whether or not they will be able to achieve their goal of attending a certain college. I have observed first hand the negative impact of this pressure. In addition, many students have suffered losses of parents, siblings, and other relatives. I can not say conclusively if the safety concerns occurring within our society have exacerbated some of the symptoms of the grieving process, but as of recently, assisting students to positively cope with grieving has risen to the forefront in many of our schools. Safety concerns have a significant ripple effect on our students, parents, and community.

Although I want to emphasize the need for support for each and everyone of our students, the youth risk behavior survey also references the disparity found in marginalized groups of students including students who identify as LGBT and those experiencing homelessness to name a few. I am continually amazed by the resilience of our students and families. We just returned from spring break, but while on break, I received an email from a parent asking about housing resources since she abruptly lost her housing due to unforeseen circumstances, had been paying for a hotel, but had depleted her funds to sustain this. As true with many families, their first go to to help with problem-solving is the school. We also had a family enroll into the district with elementary age students after enduring traumatic events. These young children are now living in a new place and attending a new school. The majority of our elementary schools do not have a full time social worker or counselor, but understanding the implications of trauma and adverse childhood experiences, efforts were made to adjust schedules to ensure student services personnel were available to meet the needs of these students. Conversely, this results in another school not having student services support.

This essentially reflects the daily decisions that need to be made on how to prioritize time and the current reality of insufficient student service staffing to adequately meet the needs of all of our students. Our district is way below recommended ratio for all student service disciplines. In

an effort to offset this shortage, Green Bay Area Public School District is continually seeking out opportunities for grant funding, however, there are some inherent difficulties with this approach. First, grant writing requires a significant time commitment which again, the consequence is another aspect of the staff person writing the grant gets neglected and bottom line, impacts delivery of services to our students. Secondly, although when grant writing, GBAPS strives to develop a sustainability plan, it can be extremely difficult to continue to provide the same level of service without allocating district funding once grants sunset.

For example, GBAPS successfully competed and secured a grant to support the LGBT population. As mentioned previously, this marginalized population has disproportionate rates of substance abuse and mental health concerns. Over the years of the grant, the district has formed an active professional learning community including staff not only from the high school, but each of our middle school settings. The grant has been used to capitalize on opportunities to build capacity to effectively support this population while working to ensure our school environments are safe and inclusive. This particular grant will be sunsetting this year leaving us once again needing to prioritize and make difficult decisions to comprehensively meet the needs of all of our students with limited resources. This is the ongoing struggle every school district faces.

I would like to conclude by asking each of you please be cognizant of this struggle as you are involved with decision-making regarding allocation of funding and sincerely thank-you for your time today.